ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT 
IN SELECTED STATES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study aimed at investigating entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment in selected states in south-east Nigeria. Relevant literature on entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment were reviewed. The human capital theory formed the theoretical framework while the cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. The sample size for this research was 400. Simple percentage was used in analyzing the research questions while the Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) method was used in testing the hypotheses. The study revealed that skill acquisition has a significant effect on youth empowerment. Innovation and Opportunity recognition significantly influence youth empowerment. The study concluded that entrepreneurship education creates employment among the youth thereby boosting their self-esteem. Skills are acquired in recognizing business opportunities and inculcating innovative culture, which contribute to the development of the economy. The study recommended that the government should provide enough training facilities where skill acquisition programmes will be held. The youth should be granted credit facilities and loans to enable them put their creative ideas into practice.

Introduction
Investment in quality education is fundamental to the construction of knowledge and is a critical component of a nation's developmental efforts. It is seen as the cornerstone of development because it forms the basis of literacy, skill acquisition, technological advancement, knowledge acquisition and ability to harness the natural resources of the environment. (Riti & Kamar, 2015).

In this, the society depends increasingly on knowledge through education. Pargaru, Ghergina & Duca (2009) summarized that the secret of a future society is education but not in the old fashioned concept of teaching but of permanent education over the entire lifetime, to gain superior competencies which include; to verify, to conceive, to create and to invent. Permanent education referred to in this context include entrepreneurship education.

In this paper, entrepreneurship education is conceptualized as a process that provides trainees with knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to create wealth for poverty reduction and self-employment. Entrepreneurship is not just running a small business that already exists, rather, it is change management, creative thinking, opportunity seeking and innovativeness (Bagheri and Pihe, 2010).

The entrepreneurship education process is designed to empower individuals with innovative and creative enterprise skills required to identify business opportunities and initiate new ventures which can contribute to economic development and poverty reduction. Akpoveta and
Agbomah (2009) captured the present manpower-labour market discrepancy scenario aptly when they observed that the Nigerian educational system has failed to produce graduates with adequate technical, cognitive and attitudinal skills required to meet the labour market demands. They noted further that majority of graduates of higher institutions in Nigeria lack the expected technical communication and human relations as well as entrepreneurial skills required for self-reliance and self-employment due to non-functional education system to which they are exposed.

Poverty can be alleviated through the development of entrepreneurship skills such as creativity, knowledge, expertise, experiences, confidence and courage.

**Statement of the problem**

Nigeria has one of the world’s highest economic growth rates, averaging 7.4% according to the Nigeria economic report released in July 2014 by the World Bank. Yet, poverty remains significant at 33.1% in Africa's biggest economy (Kazeem, 2018). For a country with massive wealth and a huge population to support commerce, a well-developed economy and plenty of natural resources such as oil, the level of poverty remains unacceptable. There are numerous business and investment potentials in Nigeria as a result of abundant, vibrant and dynamic human and natural resources. However, harnessing these resources require identifying potentially useful and economically viable fields of endeavours like in sciences, technology, business and entertainment (Jacobs, 2018) which could be achieved through proper entrepreneurship education.

However, the poor socio-economic stance of the country and the inability of youths to harness available resources and economically viable field of commerce and social venture has most often been blamed on undue emphasis on paper qualification of graduates rather than functional or pragmatic education which has resulted in the production of unemployed graduates not suited for the labour market, and inadequate empowerment of young people to invest in their own commercial or social venture. It is as a result of the increase of unemployment in Nigeria's economy at the moment that this study investigates to ascertain if there is any relation between entrepreneurial education and youth empowerment.

This study would be significant to the large percentage of individuals, especially youths who are not convinced of the benefits of entrepreneurship education which is a functional and pragmatic learning process. Furthermore, this study would throw more light on components of entrepreneurship education which could empower youths to use the finance available for adequate and fruitful investment in a venture.

**Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of entrepreneurship education on youth empowerment in selected localities of Anambra State.

- To ascertain the extent of the relationship existing between skill acquisition and youth empowerment.
- To assess the extent to which innovation affects youth empowerment.
- To examine the influence of opportunity recognition on youth empowerment.

**Research questions**

1. To what extent is the relationship between skill acquisition and youth empowerment?
2. To what extent does innovation affect youth empowerment?
3. To what extent does opportunity recognition influence youth empowerment?

Research hypotheses
Ho: There is no significant relationship between skill acquisition and youth empowerment.
H1: Innovation does not significantly affect youth empowerment
H2: Opportunity recognition does not significantly influence youth empowerment.

Review of related literature

Entrepreneurship education
Entrepreneurship education is defined as those attitudes and skills that are necessary for the individual to respond to his environment in the process of conserving, starting and managing a business enterprise. Osuala (2009) defined entrepreneurship education as a specialized training given to students of vocational and technical education to acquire skills, ideas and managerial abilities and capabilities, for self-employment rather than being employed for pay.

Youth Empowerment
Jega (2012) defines the youth as a special group of people with strong stamina and passion for realizing certain set goals and objectives. The youth are energetic and full of life; they are fearless (sometimes to a fault). They are generally militant in nature; rebellious and sometimes disregard social norms and ethics especially when they perceive lack of care and attention towards them. Youth empowerment implies a situation whereby the young and active age bracket of a community or country are given their power and authority to improve their socio-economic conditions, through exposure to the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills both in theoretical and practical terms.

Youth empowerment as described by Egbefo and Abe (2017) implies the restoration of an individual’s sense of values, strength as well as his/her own capacity to handle life’s problems.

Theoretical framework
This research work is anchored on human capital theory, a theory propounded by Robert (1991). It advocates education as a tool for improving human capital, stimulating labour productivity and boosting the levels of technology across the globe. Human capital theorist encourages spending on the nation's workforce because expenditure on training and development is a productive investment. A further expectation is that widespread investment in human capital creates in the labour force the skill-base indispensable for economic growth.

Theoretical exposition

Skill acquisition and youth empowerment
Osemeke (2012) opined that being trained on how to perform a particular job and eventually making money from it is what is popularly called empowerment through skills acquisition. This act has been proved to be a unique and very effective means of reducing youth employment in countries where it has been sincerely implemented with every sense of commitment and responsibility.

Skill acquisition comes in various forms like; acquiring skills on decision making, technological skills, creative skills, financial management skills and entire venture
management skills. These areas of skills acquisition are very important and can empower individuals into being self-reliant. Usman and Pascal (2010) note that a skilled person can survive in any environment. They remarked that lack of entrepreneurial skills is one of the major causes of unemployment, especially of the youth and this provides them with the opportunity of engaging in all sorts of violent crimes. Acquiring technological skills exposes the youth to learning some constructive activities in work setting or organizations. Technology specifically is the usage of tools, techniques and crafts. It is the system and method of organization of profitable, monetary and rewarding activities geared towards the production of wealth (Azubuike and Ugwuoke 2011). Entrepreneurship and technology development are related in so many ways especially in activities, resources and factors necessary for creation, development, manufacturing and marketing of new products. Creativity is one of the entrepreneurial skills which can be imparted and acquired through entrepreneurship education. Creativity is understood as the generation of new ideas (Cook 2005). Creativity produces not just new ideas but valuable ones. The need to acquire and develop specific entrepreneurial skills through vocational training can never be neglected because entrepreneurship is very vital to creating employment and indeed a special form of employability for graduates.

The purpose of skill acquisition programme as a means of youth empowerment according to Ogundoulo (2008) is to prepare and equip the youth with an appropriate skill that can be beneficial to them in future. He maintained that ideal skill acquisition is capable of ensuring value re-orientation among the youth and transforming them into creators of wealth and employment. Basically, the creation of wealth and employment will lead to poverty reduction and of welfare status of individuals in the country. Similarly, (Donli, 2014) is of the view that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea & knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. He further maintains that skill acquisition increases competition and cooperation among people. Skill acquisition requires a holistic approach to the realization of creative ideas. It helps in the transformation of knowledge and skills into a creative venture.

In the opinion of Salami (2011), this all-important sub-sector has been neglected by the government over the years as exemplified by poor or very low budgetary allocations that go to it. He notes that the bias of educational curricular towards science and liberal arts education with little regard to vocational and technical education has been a major contributing factor in the rising rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria. This to him is attributed largely to the belief that the educated stand a better chance of occupying top positions in the society.

Innovation and youth empowerment
Innovation is a Latin word which means to make something new. It is a new idea, device or method. The innovation skill is an entrepreneurial skill which could be imparted through entrepreneurship education. Ezeanwu (2010) sees innovation as the successful introduction of a new thing or method. (Baker, 2002) sees innovation as encompassing the entire process, starting from a kernel of an idea continuing through all the steps to reach a marketable product that changes the economy. Innovation involves changing or creating more effective process, products and ideas and can increase the likelihood of a business succeeding. Entrepreneurs implement creative ideas to introduce innovative products or services or to deliver products or services in a new, more efficient and hence innovative way. Innovation applies not only to new business and product ideas but to the internal working of a company. Innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs, which they exploit change as an opportunity for a different business or
service. Organizations irrespective of their sizes need to innovate to promptly respond to changing customer needs and market conditions and capitalize on an emerging opportunity.

Through innovation, the youth or prospective entrepreneurs would learn how to segment the market, efficient pricing, brand management, packaging, customer relations, communication management, services and other operational activities. Ionita (2012) regards entrepreneurship as an innovative and creative venture. In other words, if the youth are to succeed in entrepreneurial activities, there is a need for empowerment in the area of innovation. Lumpkin & Dess (2001) believed that the greatest empowerment that the youth can be given is to teach them how to be innovative, creative and be able to recognize opportunity where it exists. Organizations irrespective of their sizes need to innovate to promptly respond to changing customer needs and market conditions and capitalize on the emerging opportunity. It is safe therefore to conclude that any business enterprise that is left out in innovation, creativity and ingenuity, is an enterprise on its way down and of course out of the market.

**Opportunity recognition and youth empowerment**

An entrepreneur is an opportunity seeker (Mbah, 2017). Short, Moss and Lumpkin (2010) assert that without an opportunity, there is no entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is someone who recognizes an opportunity and creates a new venture to pursue it. Opportunity recognition involves taking responsibility and doing whatever it takes to ensure that there is a successful outcome. It also involves insistence, flexibility and readiness to assume responsibility for failure. Opportunity recognition is seeking out for chances that have positive outcomes. It is an opportunity-seeking, forward-looking perspective characterized by the introduction of new products and services ahead of competitors to meet future demand (Okpara, 2009). It is then more important for first-mover firms in gaining significant advantage over competitors. Opportunity recognition, therefore, enables human resources to anticipate and act on future wants and needs to create a first-mover advantage ahead of the competition. One of the traits of successful entrepreneurship is opportunity recognition. This involves taking responsibility and doing whatever it takes to ensure that there is a successful outcome. It involves insistence, flexibility, and readiness to assume responsibility for failure (Morris, 2008).

Entrepreneurship as an agent of social and economic change if incorporated through education of the youth will definitely develop entrepreneurial capabilities in the Nigeria educational institutions. Opportunity recognition happens to be one of those entrepreneurial capabilities. Being able to recognize when an opportunity calls is very important for one to succeed as an entrepreneur. Opportunity recognition, therefore, enables human resources to anticipate and act on future wants and needs to create a first-mover advantage ahead of the competition.

**Empirical review**

Several works have been reviewed to ascertain the relationship between entrepreneurship and youth empowerment. Danjuma & Akinpelu (2016) examined the impact of human capital efficiency on corporate productivity of industrial goods companies listed in the Nigerian Stock Exchange market. The study covered a period of 6 years (2009 - 2014). The results indicate that there is a positive significant relationship between human capital efficiency on Return or Assets (ROA). Udu and Ewans (2016) examined human capital development and employee job productivity using double diamond plastics manufacturing firm Aba as a case study. The study used a correlational design in an attempt to determine the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the studied variables. The results of the study showed a positive relationship between on the job training and quality of employee job productivity.
Okoye, Iloanya and Uduenze (2014) researched the extent to which entrepreneurship in Nigeria has helped to reduce youth unemployment. The study revealed that government policies and initiative have affected transformation issues. This is as a result of increased corruption and maladministration.

Salami (2013) studied youth unemployment in Nigeria: A time for a creative and innovative intervention. He referred to youth unemployment in Nigeria as a time bomb waiting to explode if effective interventions are not implemented. His work established a link between entrepreneurship and youth unemployment if adequate attention is focused on the creation of enabling socio-economic and political environment that can galvanize a culture where the youth think job creation instead of job seekers. Akpama, Esang, Asor and Osang (2011) researched the effect of non-formal education programmes on poverty reduction and unemployment among youth adults in the southern district of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. It was found through the data analyzed that through the acquisition of vocational skills, unemployment and poverty significantly reduced in the area. It was concluded that entrepreneurial training in form of vocational training is the tool needed to tackle the unemployment situation in Nigeria.

Adetayo, Oke and Aderonmu (2015) carried out research on entrepreneurship education and employment generation among university graduates in Nigeria. The study used the descriptive survey design and the results showed that entrepreneurial education empowered the respondents. The education acquired empowered them to start a business of their own.

From the empirical review, researches have been carried out in other parts of Nigeria. This study, in particular, studied the effect entrepreneurship education has on youth empowerment in the South-East, Nigeria.

Methodology

Research design
The study adopted a survey research method. This method was chosen because it is designed to scientifically describe phenomena and their relationships in the actual environment after a given time, given that a survey must depend instead on samples of respondents drawn from the population and considered a representative of the population.

Sources of data collection
This study made use of a questionnaire to generate the primary data.

Population of the study
Three states; Enugu, Anambra and Ebonyi state of the South-East were chosen using a convenience sampling technique. Three local government areas were selected from each of the states chosen. For Enugu state; Eziagu, Enugu-North and Nkanu-East local governments, for Anambra state; Ekwusigo, Idemili North and Nnewi-North local governments and for Ebonyi state; Afikpo-North, Ikwo and Ivo local governments. Stratified sampling method was adopted in this study due to a large number of local government areas in South-East Nigeria and the population drawn was 4,403. The communities were selected using simple random sampling techniques.
**Instrument for data collection**
A questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 5(Strongly Agree), 4(Agree), 3(Undecided) 2(Strongly Disagree), 1(Disagree) was adopted. The questionnaire was close-ended in nature designed to elicit information from respondents.

**Sample and sampling technique**
The sample of the study was drawn from the three states which are 5% of the population of the South-East states. The rationale for selecting 5% of the population is justified by Fawett (1997) which posits that when N (population) is large; the compute size is about 5% of the population, then the research may allow for finite population correction, which becomes relevant if the sampling fraction is large. In the same vein, the sample is also justified by Nwana (1992), where he asserted that "if the population of a study is in a few hundred, 40% or more samples will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% sample will do and if in thousand, a 5% sample will do".

Therefore, 10% was used as the sample size of this study 440.

\[
\text{Population} = 4403 \times \frac{10}{100} = 440
\]

Therefore, the sample size of this study 440

**Sample frame**
The sample frame was determined by the use of proportional stratified random sampling.

The fraction is \[
\frac{\text{sample size}}{\text{population of the study}} = \frac{440}{4403} = 0.0999318646
\]

**The proportions of the selected youth associations in the selected local government used are as follows:**
- Umumba Ndiagu Youth Forum (Youth Asso. A) \[430 \times 0.0999318646 = 43\]
- Enugu-Ngwo Youth Forum (Youth Asso. B) \[473 \times 0.0999318646 = 47\]
- Ugboro Youth Movement (Youth Asso. C) \[442 \times 0.0999318646 = 44\]
- Awor Youth Community Association (Youth Asso. D) \[1045 \times 0.0999318646 = 104\]
- Obosi Youth Movement (Youth Asso. E) \[621 \times 0.0999318646 = 62\]
- Uruagu Youth Association (Youth Asso. F) \[454 \times 0.0999318646 = 45\]
- Ibii Youth Progressive Union (Youth Asso. G) \[311 \times 0.0999318646 = 31\]
- Ikwo Youth Forum (Youth Asso. H) \[306 \times 0.0999318646 = 31\]
- Akaeze Youth Development Union (Youth Asso I) \[321 \times 0.0999318646 = 32\]

Therefore, the sample size 440 was drawn from the population of 4403 youth in the ratio of 43:47:44:104:62:45:31:31:32 respectively.

**Administration of the research instrument**
440 questionnaires were distributed out of which 412 copies were returned. Out of the returned questionnaires, 12 copies were not properly filled. The percentage of returned copies is 94; that of unreturned copies is 6%, spoilt copies is 3% and the percentage of copies of the questionnaire used for the analysis is 91%.
Reliability of the instrument
A pilot study based on the test re-test method was adopted in confirming the effectiveness of the questionnaire in eliciting information required for the study. CronbachAlpha test was used to verify the stability and internal consistency of the questions in the questionnaire. The result of the alpha coefficient value of 0.722 revealed the research instrument to be reliable.

Method of data analysis
The data generated were analyzed using simple percentages. Multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses formulated exclusively for this study. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative predictive power of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The following features of the multiple regression analysis will be used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses.

The results

Test of hypotheses

Summary of the regression result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>T-Statistics</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skill Acquisition</td>
<td>3.014</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>2.112</td>
<td>0.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Recognition</td>
<td>1.674</td>
<td>0.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-Statistics</td>
<td>4.272</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prob. (F-Statistics)</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durbin Watson</td>
<td>1.879</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Computation Using SPSS Version 21.0

H0: There is no significant relationship between skill acquisition and youth empowerment.
H1: Innovation does not significantly affect youth empowerment
H2: Opportunity recognition does not significantly influence youth empowerment.

Hypothesis one

H01: Skill acquisition has no significant effect on youth empowerment.
Hi: Skill acquisition has a significant effect on youth empowerment.
Based on the t-statistics of 3.014 and p-value of 0.003, skill acquisition was found to have a significant relationship with youth empowerment. This result, therefore, suggests that we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that skill acquisition has a significant effect on youth empowerment. This implies that skill acquisition has a significant effect on youth empowerment.

Hypothesis two

H02: Innovation does not significantly affect youth empowerment.
Hi: Innovation had a significantly affect youth empowerment
Based on the t-statistics value of 2.112 and p-value of 0.026, innovation was found to have a significant effect on youth empowerment. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept
the alternative hypothesis. This implies that innovation had a significant effect on youth empowerment.

**Hypothesis three**

\[ H_0: \text{Opportunity recognition does not significantly influence youth empowerment.} \]
\[ H_1: \text{Opportunity recognition has a significant influence on youth empowerment.} \]

Based on the t-statistics of 1.674 and p-value of 0.336, Opportunity recognition was found to have a significant relationship with youth empowerment. Based on this, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that Opportunity recognition has a significant influence on youth empowerment.

**Discussion of findings**

This work examined the effect of entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment in selected states in the South-East, Nigeria. Data were sourced from youths in the selected local government areas in each of the states under study in the South-East, Nigeria. A questionnaire was employed as the instrument of data collection. The data generated were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The result revealed that skill acquisition has a significant effect on youth empowerment. This finding is in line with the findings of Ekong and Ekong (2016), Okoli and Okoli, (2013) that there is a positive link between skills acquisition and youth empowerment as it equips the youth with the necessary skills to generate sustainable income and thereby reduce unemployment.

Innovation was also found to have a significant positive effect on youth empowerment under study. This finding tallies with the findings of Salami (2013) that entrepreneurship and youth unemployment if adequate attention is focused on the creation of enabling socio-economic and political environment that can galvanize a culture where the youth think job creation instead of job seekers.

Opportunity recognition was found to have a significant effect on youth empowerment. This finding agrees with the findings of Abuzhurl and Hashim (2017) that entrepreneurial opportunity recognition significantly mediates the relationship among social capital, entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial career options.

**Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendation**

**Summary of findings**

This work examined entrepreneurship education and youth empowerment in selected states in South-East Nigeria. The data generated were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The result revealed that:

1. Skill acquisition has a significant effect on youth empowerment.
2. Innovation has a significantly effect on youth empowerment
3. Opportunity recognition significantly influences youth empowerment.

**Conclusion**

In recent times, the government has focused on empowering youths through entrepreneurship education to reduce unemployment. Different programs for youth empowerment has been ongoing in universities, national youth service and different local government in southeast Nigeria just to mention but a few. The search for white-collar jobs which are not available has made this a serious debate. Unemployment within youth who are graduates, school leavers, has
led to serious hazards to the nation at large such as kidnapping, arm robbery, thugs who are manipulated by corrupt politicians etc. The essence of entrepreneurship education cannot be overemphasized because it creates employment among youths, builds self-esteem, provides acquisition of skills in recognizing a business opportunity, inculcates innovative culture and contributes to the development of the economy.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- The government should provide enough training facilities when skill acquisition programs are held.
- The government should support youths by providing soft loans to enable them to put their creative ideas into practice.
- The government should create an enabling environment by inculcating entrepreneurial base curriculum at all levels of education to equip youths with the necessary knowledge and skills to recognize a gap in the market when the need arises.

**References**


